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Dickens in America

I feel honored at being invited to participate in these proceedings. I was brought up under conditions where the Works of Charles Dickens were required reading. I must admit that having been forced to study many of his productions as school chores, it was only later that I appreciated his full flavor, especially as it emanated from "Pickwick Papers".

The impression has long persisted in my country that he was determinedly anti-American. Perhaps, as an American from the South, where the greatest animus against Dickens existed, I may be permitted to explain what a mistaken notion this is.

Dickens went first to the United States in 1842, at the age of 30. He was already a famous literary figure; his vogue was almost as spectacular in the United States as in the United Kingdom.

Although not the most modest of men, he must have been astonished at the adulation with which he was received in North America. If he was not suffocated by the mobs who surrounded his every sortie from hotel apartments, he was exposed to being swept away by floods of flattering oratory. No progress, as he remarked, of a crowned head was ever attended by such curiosity or acclaim. In the infancy of newspaper sensationalism, he was prize copy. What he ate, wore or spoke, was recorded in detail.

The bounties and delicacies of the American cuisine were lavished upon his wife and himself. Henry VIII, a stout trencherman, was never more plyed with victuals than this peripatetic author.

If he opened his mouth no dog barked. His commonplaces were greeted as examples of wit. His witty utterances were exalted to the sublime Though his clothing and appearance were caricatured by the press--indeed, in this respect, he was vulnerable, and to it he was sensitive--he was almost universally, during his stay, greeted as a genius. His flowing hair, ringleted to his shoulders, his flamboyant dress, set off by a display of watch fobs, trinkets, and large studs, made him an exotic object.

But neither by manner, deportment, or sartorial habit, did he court or attain unpopularity. After a five month's tour of the United States and Canada, he returned home, leaving behind him the best of reputations. He had suffered fools gladly, had urbanely listened to long-winded orators, and, after innumerable introductions, had replied to enthusiastic toasts with a truly vertiginous tact.

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Mrs. Dickens had shared in this carnival of praise, without attracting to herself any adverse comment.

But when he was again at home, and had published his impressions of his American tour, hell fire descended upon him from across the Atlantic. He who had eaten our buckwheat cakes in the morning, cheerfully ploughed through oysters, terrapin, and canvasback duck in the afternoon, and solaced himself with substantial pork products in the evening, with no meal lacking in the sauces of compliment, had rounded upon his hosts, and vented an unexpected bile on them.

It was not that he had been bored. In fact, his journeyings were, for that day, too extensive for melancholy, or even reflection, to have aroused in him other than transitory prejudices. He swept through Boston, New York, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Louisville, Cairo, Hartford, Philadelphia, Washington,

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the West, including the United States and Canada, as well as from some of the members of the British Commonwealth.

Can this connection, still fragmentized, be made more perfect? There is a ~~reasonable~~ disinclination in each democratic government to surrender any portion of national sovereignty, and ~~carefully~~ a desire to protect itself against the accidents of fortune by jealously preserving its own ~~freedom~~ choice of action.

Such a course has historically been practicable, though inefficient. Wartime coalitions have, in the West, proved adequate to counter, and finally to overcome, enemy attacks.

I am doubtful whether this will again be possible, if for no other reason, because of nuclear weapons. Their power of destruction is so unlimited, their cost so ~~immense~~ tremendous, that all the resources of the Atlantic countries, even if placed under central control, may be scarcely adequate to cope with the capacity of an enemy to wreck our civilization.

So, then, how should we proceed? We have seen the creation, in a single decade, of common institutions, enabling key countries of Europe, containing more than 180 million people, to achieve mutually advantageous economic aims. These same countries are now pressing toward the goal of political federation or confederation.

It would seem logical to ~~bring about~~ effect an even more intimate relationship between the Free States. To this end, new institutions and new procedures will inevitably be invented.

Already, the United Kingdom has applied to join the Common Market. If ~~admitted, this will not be the end of the movement to~~ this has taken place it for integration between sovereign free peoples. It will only be a step toward some eventual and fuller

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Foreign Affairs Committee, and the leading members of appropriation committees, etc., but by and large, I believe that it would be an unproductive use of time if I, or the D.C.M., except under unusual circumstances, were to go to the airport to greet the majority of Congressional travelers, many of whom have little interest in the operation of the Embassy except as a disbursing and information office.

I hope that you will permit us to continue to exercise our discretion because approximately half of our Congressional visitors have made it plain that they do not want to take time from their private concerns in London to become involved with the Embassy. A few feel that they must reciprocate our courtesies in having them met at the airport by calling, but in most of these instances their interest is usually perfunctory.

For some years now there has been a routine for dealing with Congressional visitors, regarding which I have heard no complaints and quite a few compliments. Since there is no language barrier to be surmounted, and good will exists on the part of British officialdom, things generally move quickly and efficiently at London Airport. By the time the baggage is brought in from the aircraft, all immigration formalities have taken place. Although the customs officers have a right to ask travelers to open their bags, the presentation of an official U.S. Government passport almost always results in the quick chalk mark of clearance. Thus, a number of Congressional travelers, of whom we have had no advance notice, come and go with ease and facility in and out of London. If we hear of them, it is indirectly through the airlines or in some other manner.

The Congressional travelers about whom we have received advance notice are invariably met by an American Embassy representative, selected on the basis of the traveler's needs, and, in some cases, the traveler's reputation. At one end of the scale are Americans from our Personnel Section who are highly expert in dealing with the airport authorities: at the other end is a party of officers, headed, in appropriate instances, by the Minister. In between are officers specially chosen because of the sphere of interest of the Congressional traveler. If, for example, the traveler has a special knowledge of Soviet affairs, our Soviet expert meets him, and the traveler has an opportunity to talk in the car and plan his visit in detail. The same is true with regard

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